

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 EURE-00 /024 W  
-----251254Z 101033 /53  
P 251200Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2335  
USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0769

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS:  
SUBJECT: MFA PRESS SPOKESMAN ON BOURNE VISA

1. SUMMARY: A MFA PRESS SPOKESMAN SAYS GOC EMBASSY VIENNA WILL CONTACT ERIC BOURNE, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR JOURNALIST, SAYING BOURNE WILL GET A CZECHOSLOVAK VISA IF HE AGREES NOT TO CONTACT ANY CHARTER 77 PARTICIPANTS. END SUMMARY.

2. MFA PRESS SPOKESMAN LADISLAV SOBR ON MARCH 23 ASKED THE APAO TO VISIT THE MFA IN RESPONSE TO A PHONE CALL THE EMBASSY HAD MADE EARLIER ABOUT THE STATUS OF EIRC BOURNE'S VISA REQUEST. BOURNE, A BRITISH CITIZEN WHO HAS VISITED ZECHOSLOVAKIA FREQUENTLY OVER THE LAST DECADE AS VIENNA-BASED CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR CORRESPONDENT FOR EASTERN EUROPE HAD RECEIVED NO ANSWERS FROM CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY VIENNA, ON THE STATUS OF HIS VISA APPLICATION PENDING SINCE EARLY FEBRUARY.

3. SOBR SAID BOURNE WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN IN GOC PRESS CIRCLES AND MFA FOR HIS BALANCED REPORTING AND HIS LONG EXPERIENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE. HOWEVER, SOBR SAID, BOURNE, AND BY IMPLICATION, OTHER JOURNALISTS LIKE HIM WILL IN THE FUTURE RECEIVE VISAS ONLY IF THEY PROMISE IN ADVANCE NOT TO CONTACT "DISSIDENTS." IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION, SOBR SAID THIS  
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WOULD "PROTECT THESE JOURNALISTS ACCESS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOR THE FUTURE ONCE THE CHARTER 77 ISSUE IS DEAD." ACCORDINGLY, SOBR SAID, GOC EMBASSY IN VIENNA WILL CONTACT BOURNE AND INFORM HIM OF CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH A VISA WILL BE GRANTED.

4. IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTIONING, SOBR SAID "IT WILL BE A VERY LONG TIME" BEFORE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE FILED STORIES

UNACCEPTABLE TO THE GOC ON CHARTER 77 RELATED NEWS WILL BE ALLOWED BACK INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. NAMES MENTIONED: NBC'S COLLITT, NYTIMES BROWNE AND HOFFMAN, AND LATIMES SEEGER (FOR WHOM VISA REFUSALS ANTEDATE CHARTER 77) CITED AS EXAMPLES.

5. SOBR VOLUNTEERED THAT GOC WILL CONTINUE TO EXPEDITE VISAS FOR JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN HERE BEFORE AND WHO HAVE NOT DONE ANY SUBSTANTIVE REPORTING ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA. SOBR INDICATED THEY SHOULD NOT EXPERIENCE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING VISAS AS LONG AS THEIR PURPOSE IS NOT TO CONTACT DISSIDENTS. SOBR INDICATED THAT AT SOME POINT THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE ADVISED NOT TO CONTACT DISSIDENTS BY CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN THE US. IF THEY DO NOT ADHERE TO THIS ADVICE, THEY WILL BE EXPELLED. FYI: HARPER'S MAGAZINE FREE-LANCE CHARLES SAWYER ARRIVED IN PRAGUE FIVE DAYS AGO, BUT SAYS THAT HE HAS NOT EXPLICITLY BEEN WARNED BY GOC OFFICIALS AGAINST SUCH ACTIVITY. SAWYER TOLD GOC HE WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW WRITERS, ARTISTS, ACTORS UNION OFFICIALS ABOUT GOC'S POLITICAL-CULTURAL POLICY. HE RECENTLY TOLD P AND C, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE HIS OFFICIAL INTERVIEWS ARE OVER, HE HOPES TO CONTACT SOME CHARTER SIGNERS FOR CONTRASTING VIEWS. P&C APPRISED HIM OF THE LOCAL OPERATING CLIMATE. SAWYER SAID HE HAS BEEN UNDER NO OVERT SURVEILLANCE TO DATE. HE PLANS TO STAY ANOTHER TWO WEEKS. END FYI.

6. IN RESPONSE TO GOC PRESENTATION, PAO SAID IT WAS CLEARLY AT VARIANCE WITH PRESS PROVISIONS OF CSCE FIANL ACT AND THAT "WE ARE WORLDS APART ON THIS QUESTION." HESITATED TO COMMENT FURTHER ON SPECIFIC INSTANCE UNTIL BOURNE HAD BEEN CONTACTED AND INFORMED OF THE SITUATION.

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7. FOR VIENNA: APPRECIATE YOUR CONTACTING BOURNE AND SHARING NON-FYI CONTANTS OF THIS CABLE WITH HIM AND RELAYING HIS REACTIONS TO US.

8. COMMENT: WHAT APPEARS TO BE EMERGING HERE IS A DAMAGE-LIMITING POLICY ON THE PART OF THE GOC, I.E., CONTINUING TO BAR ENTRY OF JOURNALISTS IT DOES NOT LIKE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ALLOW NEW PLAYERS ON THE FIELD FOR AT LEAST ONE ROUND, TRY TO PRESCRIBE THE ACTIONS OF OTHER ESTABLISHED FIGURES, SUCH AS BOURNE.

9. EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO WAIT UNTIL SAWYER VISIT ENDS, AND THEN CONSIDER A GENERAL PRESENTATION TO MFA ON UNACCEPTABILITY OF THIS APPROACH. CONCEIVABLY, FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA WILL PROVIDE THEOPENING. THE QUESTION IS ONE OF TIMING SINCE, BOTH IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, AND IN SEVERAL PREVIOUS INSTANCES EMBASSY HAS CLEARLY REGISTERED ITS VIEWS ON JOURNALISTS' TREATMENT AND PRESS AND MEDIA QUESTIONS WITH GOC. PROPOSED GOC

TREATMENT OF BOURNE IS AT VARIANCE WIT THE RECENTLY RECORDED  
A WEST GERMAN JOURNALIST, LATTER PUT ON HIS APPLICATION THAT  
HE WANTED TO SEE BOTH GOC OFFICIALS AND  
DISSIDENTS. MFA PRESS OFFICE SAID HE COULD SEE ONE OR THE  
OTHER BUT NOT BOTH. JOURNALIST PICKED DISSIDENTS. NOW GOC  
APPEARS TO BE TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT THAT.  
BYRNE

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## Message Attributes

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